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Resolution adopted by the Economic and Social Council on 6 July 2017

[*on the recommendation of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (E/2017/31)*]

2017/21. Assessment of the progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society

The Economic and Social Council,

Recalling the outcome documents of the World Summit on the Information Society,[1]

Recalling also its resolution 2006/46 of 28 July 2006 on the follow-up to the World Summit and review of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and the mandate that it gave to the Commission,

Recalling further its resolution 2016/22 of 27 July 2016 on the assessment of the progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015, entitled "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development",

Recalling also General Assembly resolution 70/125 of 16 December 2015, entitled "Outcome document of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society", in which the Assembly reaffirmed the World Summit vision of a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented information society, assessed progress made to date, identified gaps and challenges and made recommendations for the future,

Recalling further General Assembly resolution 71/212 of 21 December 2016 on information and communications technologies for development,

Taking note with satisfaction of the report of the Secretary-General on the progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit at the regional and international levels,[2]

[1] See A/C.2/59/3 and A/60/687.

[2] A/72/64-E/2017/12.

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Expressing its appreciation to the Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development for his role in helping to ensure completion of the aforementioned report in a timely manner,

Noting with appreciation the holding of the fourteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, in Nairobi from 17 to 22 July 2016, and its outcome document entitled "Nairobi Maafikiano: From decision to action: Moving towards an inclusive and equitable global economic environment for trade and development",[3]

Taking stock: reviewing the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society

1. *Welcomes and urges* the full implementation of General Assembly resolution 70/125;

2. *Welcomes* the constructive and diverse inputs from all stakeholders in the overall review of progress made in the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society;

3. *Reaffirms its commitment* to the full implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit and the vision of the 10-year review of the World Summit beyond 2015;

4. *Encourages* close alignment between the World Summit process and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,[4] as called for in General Assembly resolution 70/125, highlighting the cross-cutting contribution of information and communications technology to the Sustainable Development Goals and poverty eradication, and noting that access to information and communications technologies has also become a development indicator and aspiration in and of itself;

5. *Reaffirms* that one of the goals of the 2030 Agenda is to significantly increase access to information and communications technology;

6. *Welcomes* the remarkable evolution and diffusion of information and communications technologies, underpinned by the contributions of both public and private sectors, which have seen penetration into almost all corners of the globe, created new opportunities for social interaction, enabled new business models, and contributed to economic growth and development in all other sectors, while noting the unique and emerging challenges related to their evolution and diffusion;

7. *Notes with concern* that there are still significant digital divides, such as between and within countries and between women and men, which need to be addressed through, among other actions, strengthened enabling policy environments and international cooperation to improve affordability, access, education, capacity-building, multilingualism, cultural preservation, investment and appropriate financing, acknowledges that a gender divide exists as part of the digital divides, and encourages all stakeholders to ensure the full participation of girls and women in the information society and women's access to new technologies, especially information and communications technologies for development;

8. *Recognizes* that information and communications technology infrastructure is fundamental to achieving the goal of digital inclusion and that digital divides persist across income groups, age groups, geography and gender, and

[3] TD/519/Add.2 and Corr.1.

[4] General Assembly resolution 70/1.

therefore reaffirms its commitment to the 2030 Agenda, target 9.c, which aims to significantly increase access to information and communications technology and strives to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet in least developed countries by 2020, and in this regard notes the importance of the Connect 2020 Agenda for Global Telecommunication/Information and Communications Technology Development;

9. *Notes* the ongoing implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit, emphasizing, in particular, its multi-stakeholder nature, the roles played in this regard by leading agencies as action line facilitators and the roles of the regional commissions and the United Nations Group on the Information Society, and expresses its appreciation for the role of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development in assisting the Economic and Social Council as the focal point in the system-wide follow-up to the World Summit;

10. *Recognizes* the value and principle of multi-stakeholder cooperation and engagement that have characterized the World Summit process since its inception and that are clearly recognized in the 2030 Agenda, and notes that many activities that support the objectives of the World Summit and the Sustainable Development Goals are being implemented by Governments, international organizations, the private sector, civil society, academic and technical communities and multi-stakeholder partnerships in their respective roles and responsibilities;

11. *Takes note* of the reports of many United Nations entities, with their respective executive summaries, submitted as input for the elaboration of the annual report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and published on the website of the Commission as mandated in Council resolution 2007/8 of 25 July 2007, and recalls the importance of close coordination among the leading action line facilitators and with the secretariat of the Commission;

12. *Notes* the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit at the regional level facilitated by the regional commissions, as observed in the report of the Secretary-General on the progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit at the regional and international levels,[2] including the steps taken in this respect, and emphasizes the need to continue to address issues of specific interest to each region, focusing on the challenges and obstacles that each may be facing with regard to the implementation of all goals and principles established by the World Summit, with particular attention to information and communications technology for development;

13. *Reiterates* the importance of maintaining a process of coordinating the multi-stakeholder implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit through effective tools, with the goal of encouraging collaboration and partnership among all stakeholders, including international organizations, exchanging information among action line facilitators and other stakeholders, identifying issues that need improvement and discussing the modalities of reporting on the overall implementation process;

14. *Encourages* all stakeholders to continue to contribute information to the stocktaking database maintained by the International Telecommunication Union on the implementation of the goals established by the World Summit, and invites United Nations entities to update information on their initiatives in the stocktaking database;

15. *Highlights* the urgent need for the incorporation of the recommendations contained in the outcome documents of the World Summit in the revised guidelines for United Nations country teams on preparing the common country assessments and United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks, including the addition of an information and communications technology for development component, for which the United Nations Group on the Information Society has offered its assistance;

16. *Recalls* General Assembly resolution 60/252 of 27 March 2006, in which the Assembly requested the Council to oversee the system-wide follow-up to the outcomes of the Geneva and Tunis phases of the World Summit;[1]

17. *Also recalls* that, in its resolution 70/125, the General Assembly called for continuation of the annual reports on the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit, through the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, to the Council, and reaffirms the role of the Commission, as set forth in Council resolution 2006/46, in assisting the Council as the focal point in the system-wide follow-up, in particular the review and assessment of progress made in implementing the outcomes of the World Summit;

18. *Calls upon* all States, in building the information society, to take steps to avoid and to refrain from taking any unilateral measure not in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations that impedes the full achievement of economic and social development by the population of the affected countries and that hinders their well-being;

19. *Welcomes* the fact that the rapid growth in access to mobile telephony and broadband since 2005 has meant that more than half of the world's inhabitants should have access to information and communications technologies within their reach, in line with the World Summit targets, the value of this progress being enhanced by the advent of new electronic and mobile services and applications for health, agriculture, education, business, development, financial and government services, civic participation and transactional services, which offer great potential for the development of the information society;

20. *Notes with great concern* that many developing countries lack affordable access to information and communications technologies and that, for the majority of the poor, the promise of science and technology, including information and communications technologies, remains unfulfilled, and emphasizes the need to effectively harness technology, including information and communications technologies, and promote digital literacy to bridge the digital and knowledge divides;

21. *Recognizes* that information and communications technologies present new opportunities and challenges and that there is a pressing need to address the major impediments that developing countries face in accessing the new technologies, such as an appropriate enabling environment, sufficient resources, infrastructure, education, capacity, investment and connectivity, as well as issues related to technology ownership, standards and flows, and in this regard calls upon all stakeholders to provide adequate resources, enhanced capacity-building and transfer of technology and knowledge to developing countries, particularly the least developed countries, towards a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy;

22. *Also recognizes* the rapid growth in broadband access networks, especially in developed countries, and underscores the need to urgently address the growing digital divides in the availability, affordability, quality of access and use of

broadband between and within high-, middle- and low-income countries and other regions, with special emphasis on supporting the least developed countries, small island developing States and Africa as a continent;

23. *Further recognizes* that the transition to a mobile-led communications environment is leading to significant changes in operators' business models and that it requires significant rethinking of the ways in which individuals and communities make use of networks and devices, of government strategies and of ways in which communications networks can be used to achieve development objectives;

24. *Recognizes* that, even with all the developments and the improvement observed in some respects, in numerous developing countries information and communications technologies and their applications are still not available to or affordable for the majority of people, particularly those living in rural areas;

25. *Also recognizes* that the number of Internet users is growing and that, in some instances, the digital divide and the knowledge divide are also changing in character, from a divide based on whether access is available to one based on the quality of access, information and skills that users can obtain and the value that they can derive therefrom, and recognizes in this regard that there is a need to prioritize the use of information and communications technologies through innovative approaches, including multi-stakeholder approaches, within national and regional development strategies;

26. *Further recognizes* the importance of human capacity-building, an enabling environment and resilient information and communications technology infrastructure, as well as fostering multi-stakeholder partnerships, and assistance to countries in their efforts to strengthen the enabling role of information and communications technology for the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals, and notes the holding of the World Telecommunication Development Conference 2017 under the overall theme "Information and Communications Technology for Sustainable Development Goals", in Buenos Aires from 9 to 20 October 2017;

27. *Welcomes* the eTrade for All initiative launched at the fourteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, held in Nairobi from 17 to 22 July 2016, which provides a new approach to trade development through electronic exchanges by allowing developing countries to more easily navigate the supply of technical assistance for building capacity in e-commerce readiness and by enabling donors to have a clear picture of the programmes that they could fund;

28. *Takes note* of the global report of the Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development, entitled *The State of Broadband 2016: Broadband Catalysing Sustainable Development*, and notes with interest the continuous efforts of the Broadband Commission in promoting high-level advocacy for the establishment of an enabling environment for broadband connectivity, in particular through national broadband plans and public-private partnerships for ensuring that the development agenda challenges are met with appropriate impact and in conjunction with all stakeholders;

29. *Reaffirms* the commitment made in General Assembly resolution 70/125 to close the digital divides between and within countries, including the gender digital divide, through efforts to improve connectivity, affordability, access to information and knowledge, multilingual content, digital skills and digital literacy, acknowledging specific challenges facing persons with disabilities and specific needs, and groups in vulnerable situations;

30. *Welcomes* the many initiatives of United Nations organizations which support the implementation of the World Summit action lines, and encourages all action line facilitators to continue to work towards implementation of the action lines;

31. *Notes with great concern* the fact that women are 12 per cent less likely than men to make use of the Internet, and 31 per cent less likely to do so in the least developed countries, draws attention to the gender digital divide, which persists in women's access to and use of information and communications technologies, including in education, employment and other areas of economic and social development, and, in line with Sustainable Development Goal 5 on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls, calls upon Member States to adopt all appropriate measures, especially by significantly enhancing women's and girls' education and participation in information and communications technologies, as users, content creators, employees, entrepreneurs, innovators and leaders;

32. *Notes* the many initiatives targeted at closing the gender digital divide, including, among others, International Girls in ICT Day (International Telecommunication Union), the launch of the Global Partnership for Gender Equality in the Digital Age and the Gender Equality and Mainstreaming in Technology Awards (International Telecommunication Union and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women), Gender-Sensitive Indicators for Media (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), Women on the Homepage (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), the Global Survey on Gender and Media (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), the Broadband Commission Working Group on Broadband and Gender, the Best Practice Forum on Gender and Access of the Internet Governance Forum, the work being done in the World Summit on the Information Society Forum on gender issues and the work of the World Bank in a number of countries promoting opportunities for women and girls in information and communications technologies, as well as the work of many other stakeholders on this issue;

33. *Reaffirms* the commitment to pay particular attention to the unique and emerging information and communications technology challenges facing all countries, in particular developing countries, as envisaged in the relevant paragraphs of General Assembly resolution 70/125;

34. *Notes* that, while a solid foundation for capacity-building in information and communications technology has been laid in many areas with regard to building the information society, there is still a need for continuing efforts to address the ongoing challenges, especially for developing countries and the least developed countries, and draws attention to the positive impact of broadened capacity development that involves institutions, organizations and entities dealing with information and communications technologies and Internet governance issues;

35. *Recognizes* the need to focus on capacity development policies and sustainable support to further enhance the impact of activities and initiatives at the national and local levels aimed at providing advice, services and support with a view to building an inclusive, people-centred and development-oriented information society;

36. *Notes* that topics continue to emerge, such as e-environment applications and the contribution of information and communications technologies to early warning, mitigating climate change, social networking, virtualization and cloud computing and services, mobile Internet and mobile-based services, cybersecurity,

the gender gap, the protection of online privacy and the empowerment and protection, especially against cyberexploitation and abuse, of vulnerable groups of society, in particular children and young people;

37. *Reaffirms* that, in the outcome document on the overall review of the implementation of the World Summit action lines, the General Assembly called for the World Summit on the Information Society Forum to be held annually,[5] recognizes the value of the Forum in enhancing cooperation, partnership, innovation, the exchange of experiences and good practices by all stakeholders in information and communications technologies for sustainable development, and notes the most recent Forum, held in Geneva from 12 to 16 June 2017;

38. *Encourages* action line facilitators to use the Geneva Plan of Action[6] as the framework for identifying practical measures to use information and communications technologies to help to achieve the 2030 Agenda, noting the World Summit on the Information Society-Sustainable Development Goals Matrix, developed by United Nations agencies;

39. *Encourages* World Summit action line facilitators to ensure close alignment to the 2030 Agenda when considering new work to implement the outcomes of the World Summit, according to their existing mandates and resources;

40. *Reiterates* the importance of the call by the General Assembly for all stakeholders to integrate information and communications technologies into approaches to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals and its request to United Nations entities facilitating the World Summit action lines to review their reporting and workplans to support implementation of the 2030 Agenda;

Internet governance

41. *Reaffirms* that the outcomes of the World Summit related to Internet governance, namely, the process towards enhanced cooperation and the convening of the Internet Governance Forum, are to be pursued by the Secretary-General through two distinct processes, and recognizes that the two processes may be complementary;

42. *Also reaffirms* paragraphs 34 to 37 and 67 to 72 of the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society;[7]

43. *Further reaffirms* paragraphs 55 to 65 of General Assembly resolution 70/125;

Enhanced cooperation

44. *Recognizes* the importance of enhanced cooperation in the future, to enable Governments, on an equal footing, to carry out their roles and responsibilities in international public policy issues pertaining to the Internet, but not in the day-to-day technical and operational matters that do not have an impact on international public policy issues;

45. *Notes* the ongoing work of the Working Group on Enhanced Cooperation, established by the Chair of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development as requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 70/125, to

[5] See General Assembly resolution 70/125.

[6] See A/C.2/59/3, annex.

[7] See A/60/687.

develop recommendations on how to further implement enhanced cooperation as envisioned in the Tunis Agenda, also notes that the Working Group will ensure the full involvement of Governments and other relevant stakeholders, in particular from developing countries, taking into account all their diverse views and expertise, and encourages participants in the Working Group to take forward their efforts to fulfil its mandate;

Internet Governance Forum

46. *Recognizes* the importance of the Internet Governance Forum and its mandate as a forum for multi-stakeholder dialogue on various matters, as reflected in paragraph 72 of the Tunis Agenda, including discussion on public policy issues related to key elements of Internet governance;

47. *Recalls* the decision of the General Assembly, in its resolution 70/125, to extend the mandate of the Internet Governance Forum for a further 10 years, during which time the Forum should continue to show progress on working modalities and the participation of relevant stakeholders from developing countries;

48. *Recognizes* that national and regional Internet Governance Forum initiatives have emerged, taking place in all regions and addressing Internet governance issues of relevance and priority to the organizing country or region;

49. *Recalls* General Assembly resolution 70/125, in which the Assembly called upon the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, within its regular reporting, to give due consideration to fulfilment of the recommendations contained in the report of the Working Group on Improvements to the Internet Governance Forum of the Commission;[5]

50. *Notes* the holding of the eleventh meeting of the Internet Governance Forum, hosted by the Government of Mexico in Guadalajara from 6 to 9 December 2016, under the theme "Enabling inclusive and sustainable growth";

51. *Welcomes* the holding of the twelfth meeting of the Internet Governance Forum, to be hosted by the Government of Switzerland from 18 to 21 December 2017, under the theme "Shape your digital future!", and notes that, in the preparatory process for the meeting, recommendations contained in the report of the Working Group on Improvements to the Internet Governance Forum are being taken into consideration;

52. *Also welcomes*, in that context, the continuous progress made with regard to the intersessional work of the Internet Governance Forum in the different modalities of connecting and enabling the next billion online, dynamic coalitions and best practice forums, as well as the contributions being made by both national and regional Internet governance forums;

The road ahead

53. *Calls upon* United Nations entities to continue to actively cooperate in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit through the United Nations system, to take the necessary steps and commit to a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented information society and to catalyse the attainment of the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the 2030 Agenda;

[5] A/67/65-E/2012/48 and Corr.1

54. *Calls upon* all stakeholders to keep the goal of bridging the digital divides, in their different forms, an area of priority concern, to put into effect sound strategies that contribute to the development of e-government and to continue to focus on pro-poor information and communications technology policies and applications, including access to broadband at the grass-roots level, with a view to narrowing the digital divides among and within countries towards building information and knowledge societies;

55. *Urges* all stakeholders to prioritize the development of innovative approaches that will stimulate the provision of universal access to affordable broadband infrastructure for developing countries and the use of relevant broadband services in order to ensure the development of an inclusive, development-oriented and people-centred information society, and to minimize the digital divides;

56. *Calls upon* international and regional organizations to continue to assess and report on a regular basis on the universal accessibility of nations to information and communications technologies, with the aim of creating equitable opportunities for the growth of the information and communications technology sectors of developing countries;

57. *Urges* all countries to make concrete efforts to fulfil their commitments under the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development;[7]

58. *Reiterates* the importance of information and communications technology indicators in open data format as a monitoring and evaluation tool for measuring the digital divide among countries and within societies and in informing decision makers when formulating policies and strategies for social, cultural and economic development, and emphasizes the importance of the standardization and harmonization of reliable and regularly updated indicators;

59. *Acknowledges* the importance of digital monitoring tools that support the deployment and measurement of the Sustainable Development Goals;

60. *Reiterates* the importance of sharing best practices at all levels, and, while recognizing excellence in the implementation of the projects and initiatives that further the goals of the World Summit, encourages all stakeholders to nominate their projects for the annual World Summit project prizes as an integral part of the World Summit stocktaking process, while taking note of the report on the World Summit success stories;

61. *Calls upon* United Nations organizations and other relevant organizations and forums, in accordance with the outcomes of the World Summit, to periodically review the methodologies for information and communications technology indicators, taking into account different levels of development and national circumstances, and therefore:

(*a*) Encourages Member States to collect relevant data at the national level on information and communications technologies, to share information about country case studies and to collaborate with other countries in capacity-building exchange programmes;

(*b*) Encourages United Nations organizations and other relevant organizations and forums to promote assessment of the impact of information and communications technologies on sustainable development;

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[7] General Assembly resolution 69/313, annex.

(c) Notes with appreciation the work of the Partnership on Measuring Information and Communications Technology for Development and the annual *Measuring the Information Society Report*, which provides recent trends and statistics on access to and the affordability of information and communications technologies and the evolution of the information and knowledge societies worldwide, including the Information and Communications Technology Development Index;

(d) Encourages the Partnership on Measuring Information and Communications Technology for Development to follow up on Statistical Commission decision 47/110 of 11 March 2016 on information and communications technology statistics,[11] and recommends in that context that the Partnership develop guidance to improve cooperation with the different stakeholders for the purposes of producing high quality and timely information and communications technology statistics and of leveraging the potential benefits of using big data for official statistics;

(e) Notes the holding, in Botswana, from 21 to 23 November 2016, of the fourteenth World Telecommunication/Information and Communications Technology Indicators Symposium, and also notes the fifteenth Symposium, to be held in Tunisia from 14 to 16 November 2017;

62. *Invites* the international community to make voluntary contributions to the special trust fund established by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development to support the review and assessment work of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development regarding follow-up to the World Summit, while acknowledging with appreciation the financial support provided by the Governments of Finland, Switzerland and the United States of America to this fund;

63. *Recalls* the proposal in General Assembly resolution 70/125 that the Assembly hold a high-level meeting on the overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit in 2025;

64. *Takes note with appreciation* of the report of the Secretary-General and the related discussion of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development at its twentieth session;[11]

65. *Emphasizes* the importance of promoting an inclusive information society, with particular attention to bridging the digital and broadband divides, taking into account the considerations of developing countries, gender and culture, as well as youth and other underrepresented groups;

66. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, on a yearly basis, a report on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the present resolution as well as in the other Council resolutions on the assessment of the quantitative and qualitative progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit.

41st plenary meeting
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[11] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2016, Supplement No. 4* (E/2016/24), chap. I, sect. B.

[11] *Ibid., 2017, Supplement No. 11* (E/2017/31).